



Young People's Reading: The Importance of the home environment and family support

More findings from our national survey

Christina Clark and Lucy Hawkins
National Literacy Trust

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Transforming Lives

Registered address:
National Literacy Trust
68 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL

☎ 020 7587 1842
📠 020 7587 1411
✉ contact@literacytrust.org.uk
www.literacytrust.org.uk

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Executive summary

This paper presents additional information from our 2009 survey of young people's reading and writing; for more information see the full report *Young People's Reading and Writing Today*, to be published July 2010. This paper explores the types of resources young people have at home that support literacy and how this differs according to demographic background, and how home resources relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.

It also explores who in their family encourages young people to read, who in their family is seen reading and how frequently young people talk with their family about what they are reading. It also outlines how these differ according to demographic background, and how each of these relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.

Since we asked similar questions about resources in the home and parental involvement in reading in a 2005 survey of over 8,500 primary and secondary pupils, we also wanted to investigate how findings from 2009 compare with findings from 2005.

17,089 pupils aged 8 to 16 from 112 schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales participated in our online survey on young people's attitudes towards reading and writing in November and December 2009. Attainment data were available for 4,503 of participating young people for reading.

Resources in the home

- 85% of young people say that they own a mobile phone or have access to one at home, while 84% also either own a computer or have access to one at home. 77% have a desk of their own, while 73% have books of their own. 64% of young people have access to a newspaper at home, while 67% have access to magazines.
 - Book ownership in particular is related to enjoyment of reading, attitudes towards reading and reading frequency. Twice as many young people who have books of their own compared with those who do not have their own books enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot. Twice as many young people who have their own books also said that they read everyday compared with young people who do not have their own books.
 - Nearly twice as many young people who do not have their own books at home, compared with those who do, agree with the statements that reading is more for girls than boys, that reading is hard, that they cannot find anything to read that interests them, that they only read when they have to and that they do not read as well as other pupils in their class. Also, they were three times more likely to agree with the statement that reading is boring and that they only read in class.
 - Reading attainment was related to having a computer, having a desk of one's own, having books of one's own and having access to newspapers and magazines. In particular, those who struggled with reading were less likely to have books of their own at home or to have a desk of their own. They were also less likely to have access to newspapers and magazines.

Parental encouragement to read

- 8 in 10 young people said they get at least some encouragement to read from their mother. By contrast, only 7 in 10 said that their father encourages them to read to some degree.
 - Young people who get a lot of encouragement to read from their mother or father are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to have positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than young people who do not get any encouragement to read from their mother or father.

- Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother encourages them a lot. Only a third of young people who read below their expected level also say that their mother encourages them to read a lot. A similar relationship exists between reading attainment and encouragement to read by their father.
- Levels of encouragement to read by the mother have remained remarkably similar between 2005 and 2009. By contrast, there was a small decrease in the percentage of young people who say that their father encourages them to read (from 28.7% in 2005 to 25.9% in 2009).

Parents being seen reading

- Over twice as many fathers as mothers were not seen to be reading by young people (26% vs. 12% respectively).
 - Parents being seen reading is related to their children's enjoyment of reading, reading attitudes and reading frequency. Young people who see their mother and father read a lot are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to have positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than are young people who do not see their mother or father read at all.
 - Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother reads a lot. In comparison, just over a third of young people who read below their expected level say that their mother reads a lot. Though less clear-cut, a similar relationship exists between reading attainment and the father being seen reading, with a third of young people who read above the expected level for their age saying that their father reads a lot compared with only two-fifths of young people who read below their expected level.
 - There has been a slight increase in the proportion of mothers who were seen to be reading a lot between 2005 and 2009 (increasing from 39% in 2005 to 43% in 2009). The increase in fathers being seen to be reading a lot was less pronounced, increasing 2.1% (from 26% in 2005 to 28% in 2009).

Talking about reading as a family

- Almost one in six young people talk about reading with their family every day. Most talk about reading with their family at least once a week (27%). However, nearly a quarter rarely talk with their family about reading, while nearly a fifth did not talk with their family about reading at all.
 - Young people who talk with their family about what they are reading every day are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to hold positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than young people who never talk with their family about what they are reading.
 - Young people who read below the expected level are nearly three times more likely to never talk with their family about reading than they are to talk about reading every day. Conversely, young people who read above the expected level for their age are twice as likely to talk about what they are reading every day than they are to never talk with their family about what they are reading.
 - Slightly more young people said that they talk with their family about what they are reading every day in 2009 compared with 2005. Conversely, fewer young people talked with their family about reading on a monthly basis in 2009 compared with 2005, while a greater proportion said that they rarely or never talk about reading with their family in 2009 than in 2005.

*This paper presents additional information from our 2009 survey of young people's reading and writing – for more information see the full report **Young People's Reading and Writing Today** to be published July 2010. This paper explores the types of resources young people have at home that support literacy and how this differs according to demographic background, and how they relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.*

It also explores who encourages them to read, who in the family is seen reading and how frequently young people talk about reading with their family. It also outlines how these differ according to demographic background, and how each of these relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.

Literacy in the home and young people's reading: A brief overview

The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their children's literacy activities in particular, is unequivocal. For example, research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance at school, both in primary (e.g. Jeynes, 2005) and secondary school (e.g. Jeynes, 2007). The impact is the same regardless of ethnic background, family income, maternal level of education, or child's gender (e.g. Deaher et al., 2006; Jeynes, 2005). There are also numerous studies that have shown that children who grow up in a stimulating home environment – one which has a great emphasis on learning opportunities – do better academically, regardless of socio-economic background (e.g. van Steensel, 2006).

Research has also repeatedly shown that the most accurate predictor of a pupil's achievement is not parental income or social status but the extent to which parents are able to create a home environment that encourages learning, communicates high, yet reasonable, expectations for achievement and future careers, and where parents become involved in their children's education at the school and in the community (e.g. Sanders and Epstein, 1998). Literacy is one of the areas where parents have the simple facilities (a book or other reading materials) to become involved and to make a difference. Indeed, of all school subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences (e.g. Senechal and LeFevre, 2002). In turn, success in reading is a gateway to success in other academic areas as well (e.g. Jordan, Snow and Porsche, 2000).

Simple interactions, such as being read to, and exposure to books, magazines, newspapers and environmental print, impact children's progress in learning to read (e.g. Whitehurst, 1998), and children who come from richer home literacy environments show higher levels of reading knowledge and skills at the start of kindergarten (e.g. Nord, Lennon, Liu and Chandler, 2000) and throughout primary school (e.g. Wade and Moore, 2000). There is also ample evidence that parents who promote reading as a valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure. Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (e.g. Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich and Welsh, 2004), but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (e.g. Rowe, 1991).

Access to home educational resources such as books, as well as parents' or carers' engagement with reading and their own attitudes to reading, therefore all play a role in supporting a child's enjoyment of reading. For example, a large-scale international comparison study of 10-year-olds (PIRLS, Twist et al., 2007) found that children in England had among the

most books at home and that there was a clear association between the number of books in the home and reading attainment. Similarly, access at home to a computer, a desk or table to study at, books of their own and a daily newspaper were all strongly associated with higher reading achievement.

Given the link between home resources, family engagement and reading, this paper explores the following:

- The extent to which young people have access to educational resources at home and how this differs according to background demographics.
- Whether young people feel that they get encouragement to read from their parents, and how this differs according to background demographics.
- Whether young people see their parents read, and how this differs according to background demographics.
- Whether they talk about reading at home, and how this differs according to background demographics.
- Whether all of the above are associated with young people's enjoyment of reading, attitudes towards reading and reading behaviour.

In a subsample of young people for whom we have reading attainment data, we also wanted to explore:

- The link between access to resources, parental encouragement, family talk about reading and young people's reading attainment.

Since we asked similar questions about resources in the home and parental involvement in reading in a 2005 survey of over 8,500 primary and secondary pupils (Clark and Foster, 2005), we also wanted to investigate how findings from 2009 compare with findings from 2005.

17,089 pupils from 112 schools participated in our online survey between 16 November and 4 December 2009. The questionnaire consisted of 32 questions, exploring young people's background, reading and writing behaviour, perceived ability and attitudes. In addition, the survey contained a few questions about educational resources in the home and the level of family involvement in young people's reading (see **Appendix A** for an outline of these questions); these are explored in this paper.

Sample characteristics: Background demography

There was an almost equal gender split in the sample, with 51.2% of boys (N = 8,752) and 48.8% of girls (N = 8,337) participating in this survey. **Table 1** shows that the majority of pupils were 11 and 12 years old. To investigate the impact of age, three broad categories were identified according to key stages: KS2, KS3 and KS4. The KS2 category (22%, N = 3,704) refers to pupils aged 7 to 11, KS3 (63%, N = 10,842) refers to pupils aged 11 to 14, while KS4 (15%, N = 2,543) applies to pupils aged 14 to 16.

The percentage of pupils for whom we had free school meal (FSM) uptake data, which is frequently used in educational research as a crude indicator of socio-economic background, was 19.3%, with 24.7% of KS2, 18% of KS3 and 15.2% of KS4 pupils receiving free school meals. The percentages of FSM uptake in this study are higher than the national average for primary and secondary pupils (17% and 14% respectively; DCSF, 2009).

Table 1: Sample age

	%	N		%	N
8	4.8	825	13	18.5	3,169
9	7.3	1,246	14	9.1	1,554
10	9.6	1,633	15	4.3	738
11	21.9	3,735	16	1.5	251
12	23.0	3,938			

(based on N = 17,089)

When asked how they would describe their ethnic background, most pupils said that they were White British (70.2%, N = 10,955). The second and third most frequent ethnic categories in this sample were Asian or Asian British Indian (4.0%, N = 623) and White other (3.6%, N = 559). See **Table 2** for a full breakdown of ethnic background.

Table 2: Ethnic background

	%	N
White British	70.2	10,955
White Irish	1.7	259
White Traveller	0.5	76
White Romany	0.8	128
White other	3.6	559
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	2.0	316
Mixed White and Black African	1.0	150
Mixed White and Asian	1.0	162
Mixed other	1.9	297
Asian or Asian British Indian	4.0	623
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	2.2	338
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1.9	293
Asian or Asian British Chinese	2.2	337
Asian other	0.2	37
Black Caribbean	2.1	321
Black African	3.7	574
Black other	1.1	174

(based on N = 15,599)

To make comparisons by ethnic group meaningful, we combined the subcategories to form "White", "Mixed", "Asian" and "Black" background categories. While this crude categorisation may hide some important differences within ethnic backgrounds, it has allowed for general differences to be obtained at this stage.

Resources at home and young people's reading

Numerous studies show that access to books and other reading materials is particularly important to children's language and literacy development (e.g. Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995) and later enjoyment of reading and reading attainment (e.g. Twist et al., 2007).

To explore the degree of exposure to educational resources at home, pupils were asked to indicate whether they owned any of the following or had access to them at home: a mobile phone, a computer, a desk of their own, books of their own, access to a daily newspaper and access to magazines.

Access to resources and background demographics

Table 3 shows that 85% of young people say that they own a mobile phone, whereas 84% either own a computer or have access to one at home. Over three-quarters of young people (77%) have a desk of their own, while nearly three-quarters (73%) have books of their own. 64% of young people have access to a newspaper at home, while 67% have access to magazines.

Significantly¹ more **girls than boys** said that they have the following at home or easily have access to one: a mobile phone, a computer, a desk of their own, books of their own and access to magazines. There were no significant gender differences in having access to a newspaper.

The biggest differences in access to resources at home exist between **KS2 and KS3/KS4 pupils**, with secondary school pupils being significantly more likely to have mobile phones and computers at their disposal. KS3 and KS4 pupils were also more likely to say that they have a desk of their own, as well as to have access to newspapers and magazines. By contrast, more KS2 and KS3 pupils than KS4 pupils said that they have books of their own.

Table 3: Access to resources by background demographics

	<i>Mobile phone</i> %	<i>Computer</i> %	<i>Desk of your own</i> %	<i>Books of your own</i> %	<i>Newspaper</i> %	<i>Magazines</i> %
All young people (N = 17,089)	85.5	84.5	77.4	72.6	64.3	66.7
Boys (N = 8,752)	83.8	82.5	73.0	66.5	63.8	60.2
Girls (N = 8,337)	87.2	86.7	82.1	79.1	65.0	73.6
KS2 (N = 3,704)	79.1	74.7	68.9	72.7	54.1	57.7
KS3 (N = 10,842)	87.8	87.2	79.6	74.0	66.6	69.4
KS4 (N = 2,543)	88.3	87.0	80.2	66.3	69.6	68.3

¹ Any result for which statistical significance is reported was significant at the stringent level of 0.001. This means that the result would be likely to occur by chance only once in every 1000 cases. This level was chosen over the more conventional of 0.05 due to our large sample size to make it more difficult for extremely small and non-notable differences to be found to be statistically significant. For the sake of readability, actual statistical information is not reported.

	<i>Mobile phone</i> %	<i>Computer</i> %	<i>Desk of your own</i> %	<i>Books of your own</i> %	<i>Newspaper</i> %	<i>Magazines</i> %
FSM (N = 3,207)	84.5	77.6	67.6	65.5	59.6	58.6
Non-FSM (N = 13,690)	86.5	86.4	89.9	74.5	65.7	68.9
White (N = 11,977)	85.5	90.5	70.6	77.4	56.2	73.0
Mixed (N = 925)	84.9	88.9	72.4	77.5	70.3	71.1
Asian (N = 1,628)	85.9	91.2	76.4	79.5	72.4	64.9
Black (N = 1,069)	84.7	88.7	83.5	72.5	55.7	58.5

Significantly more young people who do not receive **FSMs** say that they have a computer than do young people who get FSMs. Although more young people who do not receive FSMs than those who do also say that they have a mobile phone, this difference was not statistically significant. Significantly more young people who do not receive FSMs compared with those who do say that they have a desk and books of their own. They are also more likely to say that they have access to a newspaper and magazines.

There were no significant differences by **ethnic background** and having a mobile phone or a computer. Young people from Asian backgrounds were more likely to say that they have books of their own, while young people from Black backgrounds were the least likely to say that they have books of their own but were most likely to say that they have a desk of their own. Similarly, young people from Asian backgrounds were also more likely to say that they have access to newspapers, while young people from White and Mixed backgrounds were more likely to say that they have access to magazines. Young people from Black backgrounds were least likely to say that they have access to either.

Access to resources and young people's reading

Table 4 explores the relationship between resources in the home and young people's reading enjoyment, self-reported reading ability and the frequency with which they read outside of class. It shows that the greatest difference in reading enjoyment exists with respect to owning books, with twice as many young people who have books of their own compared with those who do not have their own books enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot. Twice as many young people who have their own books also said that they read everyday compared with young people who do not have their own books.

Not only are young people who do not have books of their own less likely to say that they enjoy reading or read regularly, they are also three times more likely than young people who have books of their own to rate themselves as not very good readers.

Table 4: Access to resources and young people's reading: A snapshot

	<i>Mobile phone</i> %		<i>Computer</i> %		<i>Desk of your own</i> %		<i>Books of your own</i> %		<i>Newspaper</i> %		<i>Magazines</i> %	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot	49.9	51.5	51.1	47.8	55.7	43.5	59.0	27.5	54.2	47.6	52.6	46.4
Rating themselves to be not very good readers	6.2	5.7	5.1	10.7	4.2	8.3	3.6	12.2	4.8	7.4	4.5	8.9
Reading outside of class every day	32.9	32.4	33.7	30.3	37.6	27.3	38.7	18.0	36.3	30.7	34.4	30.7

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal place)

Table 5 compares the reading attitudes of young people who say that they have a mobile phone, a computer, a desk of their own, books of their own, access to newspapers and access to magazines with those who do not. While there were no significant differences in attitudes towards reading between those who own a mobile phone and those who do not, the table shows that there is a relationship between having a desk of one's own, having books of one's own, having access to a newspaper and magazine, and attitudes towards reading.

Some of the largest differences in attitudes towards reading exist between young people who have books of their own and those who do not, followed by those who have a desk of their own compared with those who do not.

For example, nearly twice as many young people who say that they do not have any books of their own compared with those who do have their own books agree with the following statements: reading is more for girls than boys, reading is hard, I cannot find anything to read that interests me, I only read when I have to and I do not read as well as other pupils in my class. Also, they were three times more likely to agree with the statement that reading is boring and that they only read in class.

Conversely, young people who have books of their own are twice as likely to agree with the statement that they like going to the library compared with those who do not have books of their own.

Young people were also asked how important they think reading is to succeed in life. Again, **Figure 1** shows that the greatest differences in viewing reading as important to succeed in life exist between young people who have books of their own and those who do not (13% point difference).

Figure 1: Viewing reading as very important or important to succeed in life by access to resources

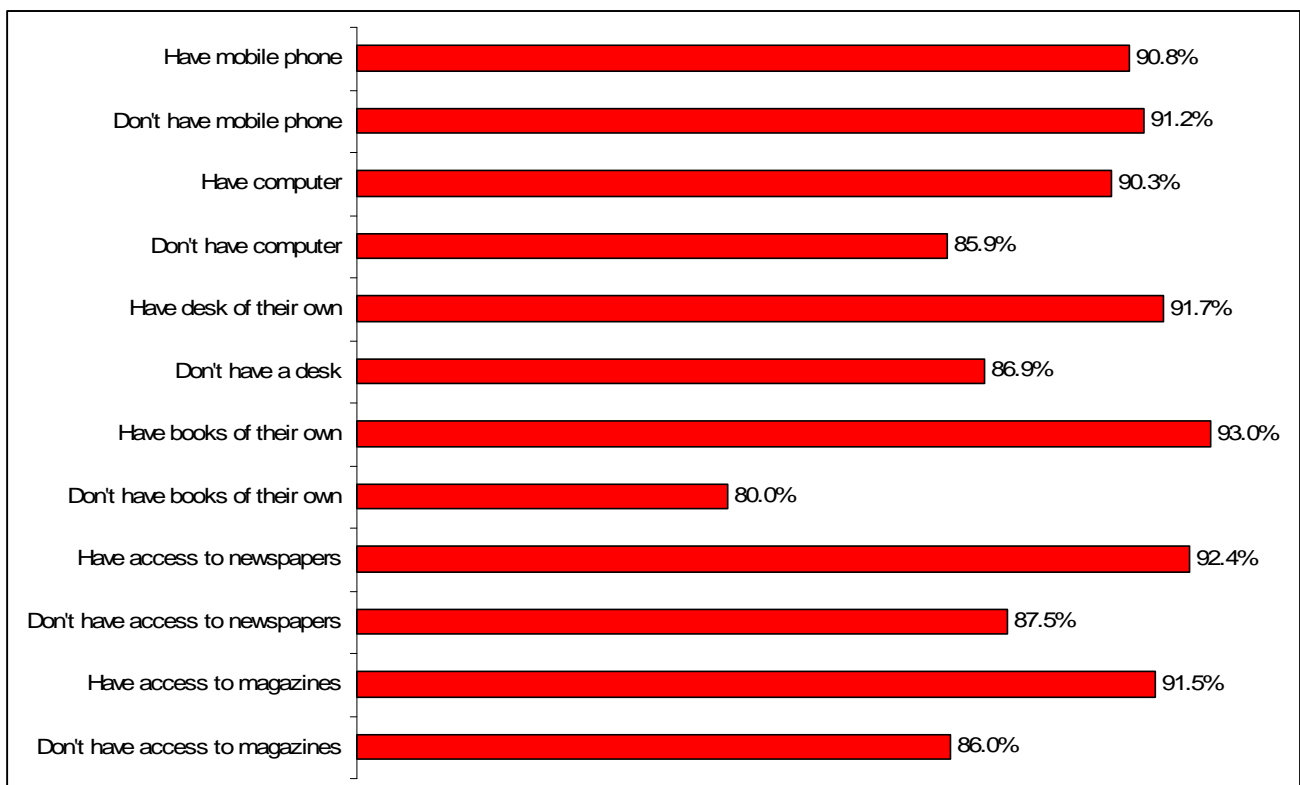


Table 5: Access to resources and agreement with nine attitudinal statements

	<i>Mobile phone</i> %		<i>Computer</i> %		<i>Desk of your own</i> %		<i>Books of your own</i> %		<i>Newspaper</i> %		<i>Magazines</i> %	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Reading is more for girls than boys	12.0	12.9	11.5	19.1	11.0	14.6	10.0	19.9	11.1	13.6	11.0	15.8
Reading is boring	18.2	19.5	18.4	21.6	15.6	23.5	11.8	39.9	15.8	21.3	16.6	23.7
Reading is hard	8.3	8.8	7.7	15.0	6.8	11.1	6.5	14.9	6.4	10.4	7.1	11.9
I cannot find anything to read that interests me	29.7	27.6	28.4	32.0	26.7	32.2	24.1	43.3	26.9	30.6	27.8	32.0
I only read in class	14.7	15.3	14.6	19.2	12.4	19.2	9.9	31.2	12.7	17.3	12.9	20.3
I like going to the library	39.4	40.2	39.1	45.8	41.5	37.4	44.3	26.2	41.2	38.8	39.7	40.4
I only read when I have to	26.0	25.1	24.9	30.8	21.9	31.1	18.8	46.6	22.1	28.5	22.7	32.2
I do not read as well as other pupils in my class	26.9	26.5	25.8	33.2	23.6	31.4	23.4	37.0	22.9	30.0	25.1	30.4
Reading helps me find what I need/want to know	68.8	66.7	67.7	66.7	69.4	64.9	71.1	56.8	71.0	64.7	68.9	64.7

Access to resources and attainment

Attainment data for reading were available for 4,503 **KS2** and **KS3** pupils. Since our attainment data contained a varied set of levels and spanned young people aged 9 to 14, we standardised the data to form three crude categories to be applied to all ages: below expected level for their age, at expected level for their age and above expected level for their age.

In line with official attainment figures (see DCSF, 2009), over 8 in 10 young people read at or above the expected level for their age. However, nearly a fifth read below the expected level for their age.

Table 6 shows that there are relationships between having (access to) certain resources at home and reading attainment. Please note that since this is not an experimental study we can only explore the **relationships** between attainment and other variables, and therefore we can make no statements about the **causality** or direction of influence between literacy components and attainment.

With the exception of mobile phones, which showed no significant relationship with reading attainment, there were statistically significant relationships between **reading attainment** and having a computer, having a desk of one's own, having books of one's own and having access to newspapers and magazines.

In particular, those who struggled with reading were less likely to have books of their own at home or to have a desk of their own. They were also less likely to have access to newspapers and magazines.

Table 6: Percentage of young people who read below or at or above the expected level and their access to resources (N = 4,503)

	<i>Mobile phone</i> %	<i>Computer</i> %	<i>Desk of your own</i> %	<i>Books of your own</i> %	<i>Newspaper</i> %	<i>Magazines</i> %
Below expected level for age (N = 793)	83.4	80.9	56.7	58.2	56.1	59.3
At expected level for age (N = 3,102)	85.6	88.0	71.6	78.6	67.6	71.0
Above expected level for age (N = 608)	86.9	84.3	75.2	80.4	69.9	68.4

Family encouragement to read

8 in 10 young people said they get at least some encouragement to read from their mother² (see **Table 7**). By contrast, only 7 in 10 said that their father encourages them to read to some degree (see **Table 7**).

There were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls in the degree to which they felt they were getting encouragement to read from their mother or their father.

There were statistically significant differences between age and family encouragement to read. A greater proportion of KS2 compared with KS3 and KS4 pupils said that their mother and their father encourage them to read. The difference was most pronounced between KS2 and KS4 pupils, with twice as many young pupils saying that their mother and father encourage them a lot.

While there were no statistically significant socio-economic differences in the degree to which young people felt that their mother encouraged them to read, there were statistically significant socio-economic differences in the degree to which they perceived their father encouraged them to read. For example, 45% of young people who do not receive FSMs said that their father encourages them to read sometimes compared with 37% of their FSM peers. Also, 36% of young people who receive FSMs reported that their father does not encourage them to read compared with 30% of their non-FSM peers.

Statistically significant differences in family encouragement to read also existed with respect to ethnic background. A greater proportion of young people from Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic backgrounds indicated that their mother encourages them to read a lot compared with young people from White ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, a greater proportion of young people from Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic backgrounds also indicated that their father encourages them to read a lot compared with young people from White ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, more young people from White than from the other three ethnic backgrounds reported that their father did not encourage them to read at all, while more young people from White and Mixed than from the other two ethnic backgrounds also said that their mother did not encourage them to read at all.

Table 7: Parental encouragement to read by demographic background

<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer encourage you to read?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %
All young people (N = 17,089)	36.1	47.2	16.7	25.9	43.1	31.0
Boys (N = 8,752)	36.7	45.7	17.6	26.3	42.3	31.4
Girls (N = 8,337)	35.6	48.7	14.7	25.6	44.0	30.4
KS2 (N = 3,704)	47.0	40.0	13.0	32.8	41.1	26.1
KS3 (N = 10,842)	36.5	48.6	14.9	26.0	43.8	30.2

² Throughout the report the terms mother and father also refer to male and female carers and significant male or female others.

<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer encourage you to read?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %
KS4 (N = 2,543)	23.2	51.3	25.5	16.5	43.0	40.5
FSM (N = 3,207)	38.2	43.9	17.9	27.4	36.5	36.1
Non-FSM (N = 13,690)	35.5	48.0	16.5	25.4	44.7	29.9
White (N = 11,977)	33.3	49.5	17.2	22.3	44.2	33.5
Mixed (N = 925)	39.3	43.0	17.7	30.9	43.6	25.5
Asian (N = 1,628)	45.2	43.8	11.0	37.7	41.3	21.0
Black (N = 1,069)	54.4	35.0	10.6	39.8	35.4	24.8

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal place)

Parental encouragement to read and young people's reading

Table 8 shows that nearly twice as many young people who say that they get a lot of encouragement to read from their mother or father say that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot compared with young people who do not get any encouragement to read from either their mother or father. Over twice as many young people who say that they get a lot of encouragement to read from their mother or father also say that they read outside of class everyday compared with young people who do not get any encouragement to read at all. Furthermore, young people who do not get any encouragement to read from their mother and their father are twice as likely to believe that they are not very good readers compared with young people who either get a lot of encouragement or some encouragement.

Table 8: Parental encouragement to read and young people's reading enjoyment, self-reported reading ability and reading frequency

<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer encourage you to read?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %	<i>Yes, a lot</i> %	<i>Yes, sometimes</i> %	<i>No, not at all</i> %
Enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot	64.7	45.4	37.2	66.4	50.2	39.5
Rating themselves to be not very good readers	4.7	5.0	10.4	4.8	4.0	8.5
Reading outside of class every day	43.8	27.6	17.9	46.2	31.7	26.7

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal point)

Young people who feel that they are being encouraged to read by their mother or father tend to hold more positive attitudes towards reading than young people who do not feel that they are being encouraged to read (see **Table 9**).

For example, young people who are not encouraged to read by their mother or father are more likely to agree with the statements: that reading is more for girls than boys, that reading is boring and hard, that they cannot find anything to read that interests them, that they only read in class and that they only read when they have to, compared with young people who feel that they get a lot of encouragement from their mother or father.

Table 9: Parental encouragement to read and young people’s attitudes towards reading (% agreement)

<i>Agreement with nine attitudinal statements</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Reading is more for girls than boys	11.6	11.2	16.4	10.8	9.9	15.4
Reading is boring	11.7	18.6	33.7	10.8	15.5	28.8
Reading is hard	8.4	7.6	10.2	8.0	6.7	10.4
I cannot find anything to read that interests me	24.6	28.9	35.8	25.8	25.6	34.2
I only read in class	10.3	14.7	24.4	9.5	12.8	21.3
I like going to the library	53.1	33.5	29.7	54.1	36.2	31.3
I only read when I have to	19.4	25.9	35.9	18.6	22.4	33.8
I do not read as well as other pupils in my class	24.8	27.2	28.0	22.9	25.0	33.3
Reading helps me find what I need/want to know	77.0	65.2	53.6	77.9	67.7	58.8

Young people who feel that they get a lot of encouragement to read from their mother are more likely to believe that reading is either very important or important to succeed in life (95.1%) compared with young people who do not get any encouragement from their mother (77.9%).

Similarly, young people who feel that they get a lot of encouragement to read from their father are more likely to believe that reading is either very important or important to succeed in life (95.2%) compared with young people who do not get any encouragement from their father (83.0%).

Encouragement to read and reading attainment

Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother encourages them a lot compared with nearly a third of young people who read below their expected level (see **Table 10**). Furthermore, twice as many young people who read below the expected level said that their mother does not encourage them to read at all compared with young people who read above the expected level.

Table 10 also shows that a similar relationship exists between reading attainment and encouragement to read by their father, with nearly half of young people who read above the expected level for their age saying that their father encourages them a lot compared with only two-fifths of young people who read below their expected level.

Table 10: Percentage of young people who read below or at or above the expected level and parental encouragement to read (N = 4,503)

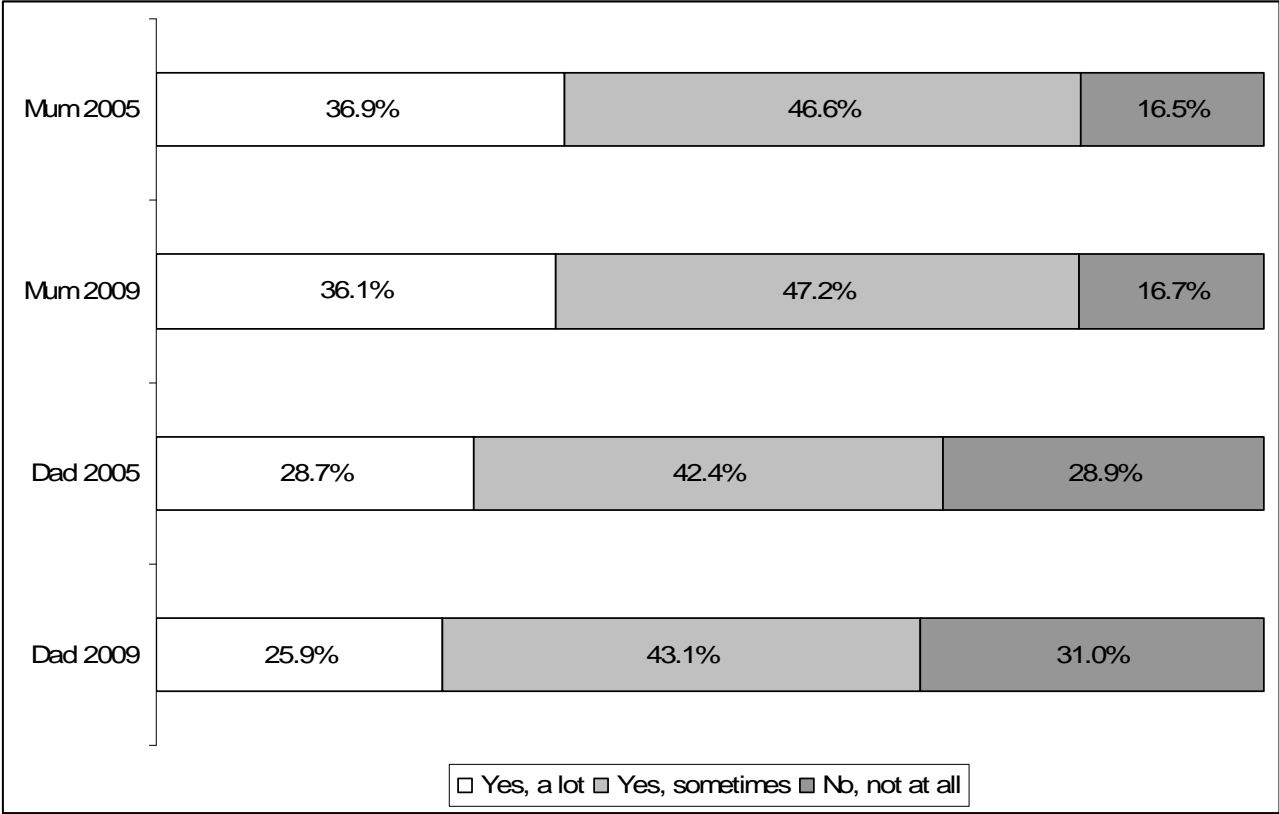
<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer encourage you to read?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Below expected level for age (N = 793)	30.2	48.2	21.6	21.3	39.9	38.8
At expected level for age (N = 3,102)	36.0	49.6	14.4	25.7	46.4	27.9
Above expected level for age (N = 608)	47.8	41.8	10.4	45.5	34.2	20.3

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal place)

Parental encouragement to read: 2005 and 2009 comparative analyses

Compared to equivalent questions asked in 2005, **Figure 2** (overleaf) shows that levels of encouragement to read by the mother have remained remarkably similar between 2005 and 2009. By contrast, there was a small decrease in the percentage of young people who say that their father encourages them to read (from 28.7% in 2005 to 25.9% in 2009). Concomitantly, there were slight increases in the percentage of young people who said that their father encourages them to read sometimes or not at all between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 2: Encouragement to read by mother and father in 2005 and 2009



Who in the family is seen reading?

In addition to parental encouragement to read, we also asked a couple of questions about who in the family is seen reading. Over twice as many fathers as mothers were not seen to be reading by young people (26% vs. 12% respectively; see **Table 11**).

There were significant gender differences in the degree to which mothers and fathers were seen to be reading. However, a greater proportion of KS2 compared with KS3 and KS4 pupils said that their mother and their father read a lot.

There were also significant socio-economic differences in the degree to which young people perceived their parents spend time reading. For example, compared with pupils who do not receive FSMs, those who receive FSMs were more likely to report that their mother and father do not spend any time reading; a difference that was particularly pronounced with respect to the father's perceived reading behaviour.

There were also several statistically significant differences in the degree to which young people from different ethnic backgrounds believed that their parents spend time reading. For example, a smaller proportion of young people from Asian than the other three ethnic backgrounds reported that their mother reads a lot. Conversely, a greater proportion of young people from Black backgrounds perceived their father read a lot, while young people from White backgrounds were more likely than young people from the other three ethnic backgrounds to say that their father does not read at all.

Table 11: Who in the family is seen reading by demographic background

<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer spend time reading?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
All young people (N = 17,089)	43.4	44.2	12.5	28.1	45.5	26.4
Boys (N = 8,752)	43.9	43.4	12.7	28.3	45.7	26.0
Girls (N = 8,337)	42.9	44.8	12.3	27.9	45.3	26.8
KS2 (N = 3,704)	48.1	42.2	9.7	30.6	45.5	23.9
KS3 (N = 10,842)	42.9	44.4	12.7	28.1	45.8	26.2
KS4 (N = 2,543)	39.1	45.3	15.6	25.3	44.3	30.4
FSM (N = 3,207)	39.9	44.0	16.1	25.7	41.0	33.4
Non-FSM (N = 13,690)	44.1	44.2	11.7	28.6	46.5	24.8
White (N = 11,977)	44.9	43.3	11.8	26.8	46.1	27.1
Mixed (N = 925)	42.6	45.5	11.9	29.7	45.7	24.6

<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer spend time reading?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Asian (N = 1,628)	34.0	50.0	16.0	29.3	46.8	23.9
Black (N = 1,069)	45.9	41.3	12.8	38.1	38.4	23.9

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal place)

Parents spending time reading and young people's reading

Mirroring the relationships seen with respect to encouragement to read, **Table 12** shows that nearly one in six young people who say that their mother and father read a lot say that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot, compared with only one in three young people who do not see their mother or father read.

Nearly twice as many young people who say that they see their mother and father read a lot also say that they read outside of class everyday compared with young people who do not see their mother or father read.

By contrast, young people who do not see their mother read are nearly three times more likely, and young people who do not see their father read are nearly twice as likely, to believe that they are not very good readers compared with young people who see their mother or father read a lot.

Table 12: Being seen to be reading and young people's reading

<i>Who in the family is seen reading?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot	57.8	48.8	34.8	61.2	52.4	38.8
Rating themselves to be not very good readers	4.7	4.9	11.8	4.1	4.3	9.2
Reading outside of class every day	39.1	31.0	22.6	42.3	33.5	25.3

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal point)

Young people who see their mother and their father read a lot tend to hold more positive attitudes towards reading than young people who do not see their parents read (see **Table 13**). While they are more likely to agree with the statements that they like going to the library and that reading helps them find information they want or need to know, they are less likely to agree with the statements that reading is more for girls than boys, that reading is boring and hard, that they cannot find anything to read that interests them, that they only read in class and that they

only read when they have to, compared with young people who do not see their mother or father read.

Table 13: Being seen reading and young people's attitudes towards reading

<i>Agreement with nine attitudinal statements</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Reading is more for girls than boys	11.2	10.7	19.2	9.2	10.3	17.0
Reading is boring	14.3	18.2	34.2	12.9	15.4	29.5
Reading is hard	7.9	7.4	13.0	6.9	6.9	11.7
I cannot find anything to read that interests me	25.9	28.1	39.9	25.1	26.0	35.5
I only read in class	11.6	14.4	27.6	10.7	12.4	22.8
I like going to the library	44.2	37.9	30.1	46.1	38.9	33.0
I only read when I have to	21.1	25.3	39.4	20.1	22.0	35.2
I do not read as well as other pupils in my class	25.1	26.3	31.6	22.6	24.8	31.7
Reading helps me find what I need/want to know	72.0	66.6	55.9	74.	67.9	60.0

Young people whose mother and father read a lot are also more likely to believe that reading is either very important or important to succeed in life (92.9%) compared with young people who do not see their mother read at all (78.4%).

Similarly, young people who see their father read a lot are more likely to believe that reading is either very important or important to succeed in life (94.1%) compared with young people who do not see their father read at all (83.2%).

Parents being seen reading and reading attainment

Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother reads a lot compared with just over a third of young people who read below their expected level (see **Table 14**). Though less clear-cut, a similar relationship exists between reading attainment and the father being seen to be reading, with a third of young people who read above the expected level for their age saying that their father reads a lot compared with only two-fifths of young people who read below their expected level.

Table 14: Percentage of young people who read below or at or above the expected level and the degree to which parents are seen to be reading (N = 4,503)

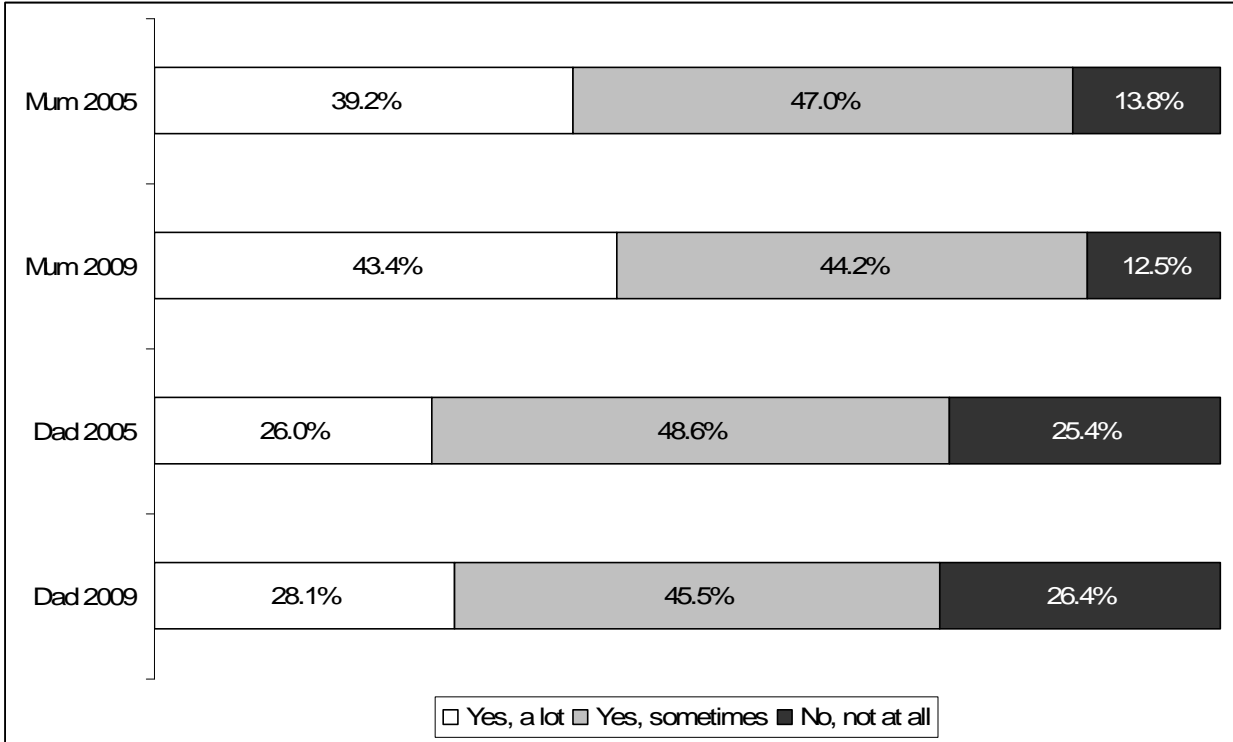
<i>Do your mum/carer and dad/carer encourage you to read?</i>						
	<i>Mother</i>			<i>Father</i>		
	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>	<i>Yes, a lot %</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes %</i>	<i>No, not at all %</i>
Below expected level for age (N = 793)	37.1	45.5	17.4	22.1	42.3	35.6
At expected level for age (N = 3,102)	44.3	45.1	10.6	29.0	48.0	22.9
Above expected level for age (N = 608)	50.9	36.7	12.4	35.1	39.7	25.2

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal place)

Parents spending time reading: 2005 and 2009 comparative analyses

Figure 3 shows that there has been a slight increase in the proportion of mothers and fathers who were seen to be reading a lot between 2005 and 2009. For example, there was a 4.2% point increase in the proportion of mothers who were seen reading a lot (from 39% in 2005 to 43% in 2009). The increase in fathers being seen to be reading a lot was less pronounced, increasing 2.1% points (from 26% in 2005 to 28% in 2009).

Figure 3: Parents being seen reading in 2005 and 2009



Frequency with which young people talk about what they are reading with their family

Finally, we also explored how frequently young people talk about what they are reading with their family. Almost one in six young people talk with their family about what they are reading every day (see **Table 15**). Most talk about what they are reading with their family at least once a week (27%). However, nearly a quarter rarely talk with their family about what they are reading, while nearly a fifth did not talk with their family about what they are reading at all.

Girls tend to talk about what they are reading with their family more frequently than boys. The greatest difference in the frequency with which young people talk about what they are reading with their family existed between the key stages. For example, nearly four times as many KS2 than KS4 pupils say that they talk about what they are reading with their family every day. Overall, post-hoc tests indicated that KS2 pupils talk more frequently about what they are reading with their family than KS3 pupils who, in turn, talk about their reading with their family more frequently than KS4 pupils.

There was no significant difference between socio-economic background and the frequency with which young people talk with their family about what they are reading.

There were significant differences in the frequency with which young people from different ethnic backgrounds talk about their reading with their family, with young people from White backgrounds talking about what they are reading with their family less frequently than young people from Mixed, Asian or Black backgrounds. Young people from Mixed and Black ethnic backgrounds tended to talk about their reading with their family most frequently.

Table 15: Frequency with which young people talk about what they are reading with their family and background demographics

	<i>Every day</i>	<i>At least once a week</i>	<i>At least once a month</i>	<i>A few times a year</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>I do not talk with my family</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All young people (N = 17,089)	14.7	27.1	12.2	5.6	22.3	18.0
Boys (N = 8,752)	13.6	25.1	12.0	6.2	22.8	20.3
Girls (N = 8,337)	15.9	29.2	12.5	4.9	21.9	15.6
KS2 (N = 3,704)	28.8	33.3	8.5	4.9	13.8	10.6
KS3 (N = 10,842)	11.7	27.1	13.1	5.7	23.8	18.6
KS4 (N = 2,543)	7.5	17.6	13.7	6.4	28.5	26.2
FSM (N = 3,207)	18.8	25.7	9.2	5.6	20.5	20.3
Non-FSM (N = 13,690)	13.6	27.4	12.9	5.6	22.9	17.6
White (N = 11,977)	13.4	26.6	12.8	5.7	23.3	18.2
Mixed (N = 925)	19.5	28.7	11.2	4.7	20.0	16.0

	<i>Every day</i>	<i>At least once a week</i>	<i>At least once a month</i>	<i>A few times a year</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>I do not talk with my family</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Asian (N = 1,628)	16.5	31.6	11.0	5.6	17.8	17.6
Black (N = 1,069)	21.7	27.1	9.2	5.1	20.3	16.6

(Please note that numbers might not add up to 100% as percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one decimal point)

Extent to which young people talk about what they are reading and its link to reading enjoyment, attitudes towards reading and reading frequency

Two groups of young people are going to be compared in the following analyses that explore the link between the frequency with which young people talk with their family about what they are reading and their overall reading enjoyment, reading frequency and attitudes towards reading: those who say that they talk about what they are reading with their family every day (N = 2,329) and those who never talk with their family about what they are reading (N = 2,858).

Table 16 shows that over three times as many young people who talk about their reading every day compared with those that never talk about their reading with their family say that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot, with 8 in 10 young people who talk about their reading every day enjoying reading, compared with only 2 in 10 young people who never talk about their reading with their family.

Only 4% of young people who talk about their reading with their family every day rated themselves as not very good readers. Young people who never talk about their reading with their family were three times more likely to believe that they are not very good readers.

There was also a clear relationship between the degree to which young people talk about what they are reading with their family and the degree to which they spend time reading outside of class. When asked how often they read outside of class, nearly 7 in 10 young people who talk about their reading with their family every day say that they read outside of class every day compared with only 2 in 10 young people who never talk about their reading with their family.

Table 16: Talking about their reading with their family and young people's reading enjoyment, self-reported reading ability and reading frequency

	<i>Talk about their reading every day</i>	<i>Never talk about their reading</i>
	%	%
Enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot	79.1	22.7
Rating themselves to be not very good readers	4.3	14.0
Reading outside of class every day	65.4	18.4

Young people who talk about what they are reading with their family every day tend to hold more positive attitudes towards reading than young people who never talk about reading with their family (see **Table 17**).

In particular, young people who never talk about their reading with their family were six times more likely than young people who talk about reading with their family every day to agree with the statement that reading is boring. They were also four times more likely to agree with the statement that they only read in class, and three times more likely to agree with the statement that they only read when they have to.

By contrast, young people who talk about reading with their family every day are nearly four times more likely to agree with the statement that they like going to the library and twice as likely to agree with the statement that reading will help them get the information they need or want to know.

Table 17: Frequency with which young people talk about what they are reading with their family and their attitudes towards reading (% agreement)

	<i>Talk about their reading every day</i> %	<i>Never talk about their reading</i> %
Reading is more for girls than boys	12.2	20.6
Reading is boring	6.8	45.3
Reading is hard	8.7	13.9
I cannot find anything to read that interests me	17.8	44.1
I only read in class	8.2	34.4
I like going to the library	72.7	19.9
I only read when I have to	14.0	49.6
I do not read as well as other pupils in my class	21.5	34.5
Reading helps me find what I need/want to know	84.6	48.2

Young people who talk with their family about what they are reading every day are more likely to believe that reading is either very important or important to succeed in life (96.4%) compared with young people who never talk with their family about what they are reading (74.9%).

Talking about reading with family and reading attainment

There is a relationship between reading attainment and the frequency with which young people talk with their family about what they are reading (see **Table 18**). Young people who read below the expected level are nearly three times more likely to never talk with their family about reading than they are to talk about reading every day. Conversely, young people who read above the

expected level for their age are twice as likely to talk about what they are reading every day than they are to never talk with their family about what they are reading.

Table 18: Percentage of young people who read below or at or above the expected level and the extent to which they talk with their family about what they are reading (N = 4,503)

	<i>Talk about their reading every day</i> %	<i>Never talk about their reading</i> %
Below expected level for age (N = 793)	10.0	28.6
At expected level for age (N = 3,102)	12.9	14.5
Above expected level for age (N = 608)	31.5	14.5

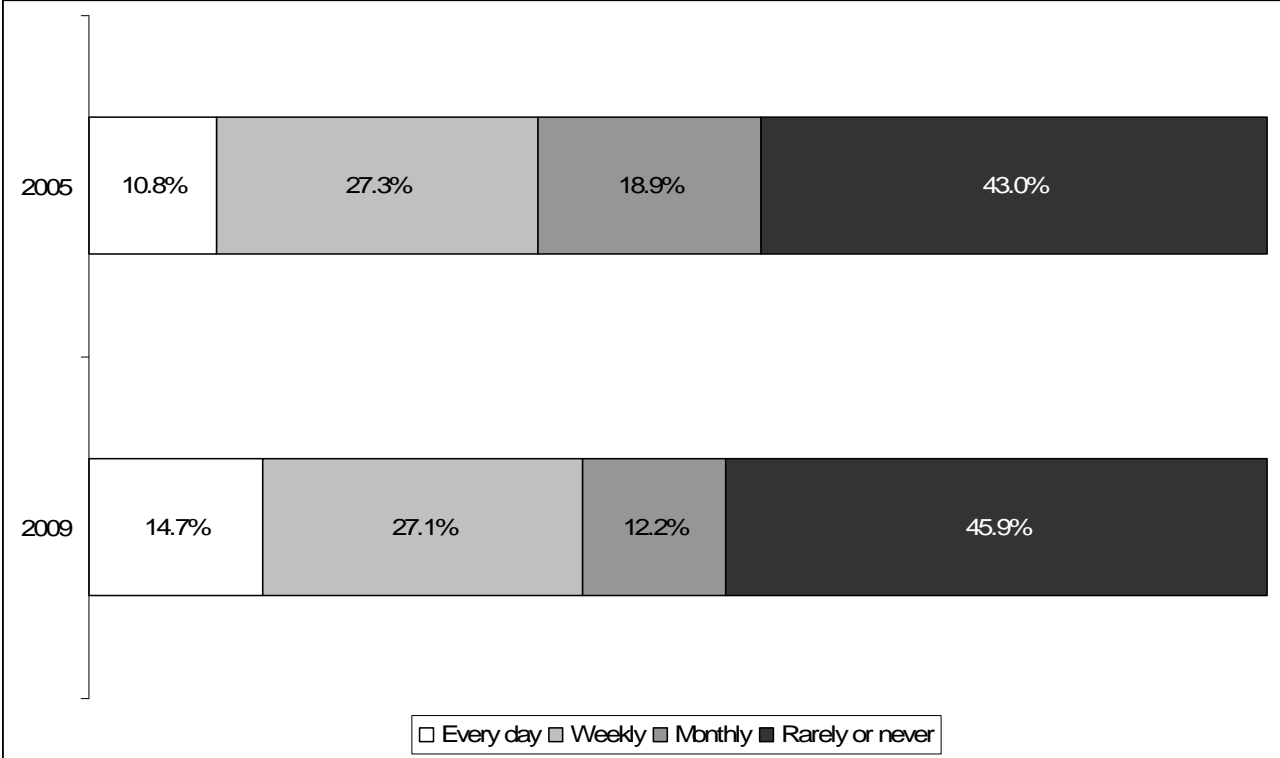
Frequency with which young people talk with their family about reading: 2005 to 2009 comparative analyses

Although an equivalent question was asked both in the 2005 and the 2009 survey, apart from the response option “Every day or almost every day”, there were slight variations in how the other options were worded in 2005 and 2009.

In 2005, the options included “Once or twice a week”, “Once or twice a month”, and “Never or almost never”. In 2009, the options included “At least once a week”, “At least once a month”, “A few times a year”, “Rarely” and “I do not talk with my family about what I am reading”.

For the purpose of comparison, “2 to 3 times a month” and “once a month” were combined into a monthly category. Similarly, “rarely” and “never” were combined to form a category. **Figure 4** shows that a slightly higher proportion of young people said that they talk with their family about what they are reading every day in 2009 compared with 2005. Conversely, fewer young people talked with their family about reading on a monthly basis in 2009 compared with 2005, while a greater proportion said that they rarely or never talk about reading with their family in 2009 than in 2005.

Figure 4: Frequency with which young people talk with their family about what they are reading in 2005 and 2009



A way forward

For us, these findings provide both a reassurance to our existing project models, as well as a reiteration of our mission.

For our projects such as National Young Readers' Programme (NYRP), which champions book ownership, it is reassuring to see the correlation between owning books at home and greater enjoyment of reading, more positive attitudes towards reading and greater reading frequency. Particularly, as this model focuses more on books (in all their forms) rather than newspapers and magazines, it is reassuring to see that it is this form of resource that correlates most closely with these improvements. Similarly, as the NLT has developed more work which focuses on family encouragement and involvement (as part of Early Reading Connects, Reading Connects, Reading Champions and the new models of NYRP for Families), it is reassuring to see the positive correlations between family encouragement and talking about reading as a family and the child's attitudes to reading.

However, this picture of *Young People's Reading* does not allow us to rest on our laurels – it highlights some key areas of need. The gap in access to resources (particularly books) between boys and girls is a clear area to consider in the development of projects such as Reading Champions and Reading The Game. Similarly, the remaining gap in access to resources between those who do and do not receive free school meals provides a reiteration of our NLT mission to equip social mobility through literacy. Finding that children who see their parents read frequently have improved enjoyment, attitude and frequency of reading should also inform the development of our future work with families. Providing more as a charity in support of adult literacy and enjoyment of reading could potentially inform new partnerships, training and/or improved signposting to other organisations.

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Appendix A: Family-specific questions

Which of these do you own or have access to at home? (Tick as many as you like)

- A mobile phone
- A computer
- A desk of your own
- Books of your own
- A daily newspaper
- Magazines
- Profile on a social networking site
- A blog

How often do you talk with your family about what you are reading? (Tick one box only)

- Every day or almost every day
- At least once a week
- A least once a month
- A few times a year
- Rarely
- I do not talk about what I am reading with my family

Who encourages you to read?

Does your mum or carer encourage you to read? Yes, a lot; Yes, sometimes, No, not at all

Does your dad or carer encourage you to read? Yes, a lot; Yes, sometimes, No, not at all

Who in your family spends time reading?

Does your mum or carer spend time reading? Yes, a lot; Yes, sometimes, No, not at all

Does your dad or carer spend time reading? Yes, a lot; Yes, sometimes, No, not at all